

Project Report
Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc.
Project Number No. 174-05
January 1, 2009 – March 31, 2009

Project Title & Summary

Four project work scopes are embodied in this grant award. The majority of the award is dedicated to two work scopes, the Capital Grant Program and radio digital conversion.

Public Broadcasting Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project

The purpose of the Public Broadcasting Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project is to provide much needed capital revenue for addressing system-wide infrastructure and technology priorities. In 2004, a system-wide infrastructure and technology needs assessment, ranging from basic tools to new facilities, approximated \$38 million. Total Denali Commission funding: \$6,127,000

Public Radio Conversion to Digital Transmission

Alaska's 28 public radio stations are changing their primary transmission equipment to the new standard for digital broadcasting. Funding the appropriate needs for all of the stations will cost approximately \$4 million. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has already committed \$2.5 million toward this total and the Rasmuson Foundation has committed approximately \$700k toward the total. This critical funding will assure the project has the capacity to meet anticipated as well as some unanticipated needs. Total Denali Commission funding: \$800,000

Digital Distribution Network

Public Broadcasting data network interconnects all of Alaska's public radio and television stations by means of a digital intranet and the internet. This project was originally funded by the Denali Commission in FY04. \$1.9 million was set aside to build this modern telecommunications infrastructure. Additional funding is necessary for completion of this project. Total Denali Commission funding: \$100,000

Alaska Rural Communications Service (ARCS) & Satellite Interconnection Revitalization

Repair and replacement of existing broadcast infrastructure used to deliver public telecommunications services via radio and television to Alaskans all across the State. This project was originally funded by the Denali Commission in FY04. Additional funding is necessary for completion of this project. Total Denali Commission funding: \$100,000

Reporting Period: January 1, 2009 – March 31, 2009

Progress and activity during the fourth quarter of 2008 occurred within two work scope components: the facilities and equipment modernization project and the digital conversion project.

Facilities & Equipment Modernization Project – Capital Grant Program

Progress to date includes successful development and implementation of this capital grant program. APBI modeled the grant program after three well established programs which are familiar to public broadcasters in Alaska: the Rasmuson Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Public Telecommunications & Facilities Program, U.S. Dept. of Commerce. We focused on the Rasmuson Foundation approach while incorporating some good ideas from the other two entities. We sought a high degree of integrity and accountability throughout development of the grant program.

Milestones reached since project inception:

2005

- Development of grant program concept and materials: overview, guidelines, priorities, procedures and panel review process, including development of application paperwork and administrative systems.
- Announcement of the Round I grant period occurred July 27, 2005. Applications were distributed electronically as well as via U.S. mail to all eligible entities. Deadline for the applications was September 30, 2005.
- A five person, independent grant panel met in Anchorage October 16-17, 2005 to review Round I proposals and make recommendations resulting in seventeen projects being awarded \$815,529 toward a total project cost of \$1,228,990. Collectively, the stations funded 34% of the total project cost.
- The panel process went smoothly and produced a legitimate independent review of the proposals per the grant program priorities and guidelines. It was evident that the panel had read all proposals and had come to the meeting ready to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. Throughout the review, the APBI staff provided additional station and system information to the panel as requested.
- On October 26, 2005 the APBI board of directors approved the overall package of recommendations made by the panel and management. Round I award announcements were made October 31, 2005.

2006

- Announcement of the Round II grant period occurred March 10, 2006. Applications were distributed electronically as well as via U.S. mail to all eligible entities. Deadline for the applications was June 1, 2006.

- Round II received seventeen proposals requesting \$998,290 in financial assistance toward total project costs of \$1,170,232. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 15% of the total project cost. Five proposals were for facility improvements and twelve were for equipment.
- A five person, independent grant panel met in Anchorage June 29-30, 2006 to review proposals and make recommendations. The panel recommended that eight proposals be funded with no conditions attached and six be funded with conditions attached. Three proposals were not funded although the panel recommended that the applicants be given an opportunity to resubmit their proposals in order to address panel concerns. All three proposals were resubmitted and awarded grants.

2007

- An update of the system wide assessment was completed in August, 2007. Although many needs have been met since the original assessment in 2004, the system reports approximately \$36 million in unmet capital needs.
- Announcement of Round III of the grant program occurred August 17, 2007. Applications were distributed electronically to all eligible entities. Deadline for application was October, 19, 2007. Sixteen proposals were received by the deadline requesting \$916,371 toward a combined total project cost of \$1,179,703. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 17% of the total project costs. The proposals were reviewed by a grant panel on November 15-16, 2007.
- Round III grant award announcements were made in early December, 2007. The panel recommended that five proposals be funded with no conditions attached and eight be funded with conditions attached. Three proposals were not funded although the panel recommended that the applicants be given an opportunity to resubmit their proposals in order to address panel concerns. One of the three proposals has been resubmitted and was awarded a grant following additional panel review.

2008

- Round IV was announced October 1, 2008. Deadline for application was December 10, 2008. Fourteen proposals were received by the deadline requesting \$902,753 toward a combined total project cost of \$1,016,831. Collectively, the stations funded approximately 11% of the proposed total project costs.

2009

- Round IV grant panel met January 22-23, 2009 in Anchorage. Round IV grant award announcements were made in early February, 2009. The panel recommended that six proposals be funded with no conditions attached and six be funded with conditions attached. Two proposals were not funded although the panel recommended that the applicants be given an opportunity to resubmit their proposals in order to address panel concerns.

APBI continues to monitor grantee compliance for all projects through quarterly reporting requirements.

Public Radio Conversion to Digital Transmission

APBI continues to provide engineering advice, counsel and overall project management for the conversion to digital broadcasting in Alaska.

Milestones to date include:

- Installation and conversion of stations began in November 2005 in Southeast Alaska at KRBD Ketchikan the first non-commercial digital broadcaster in Alaska.
- Conversion to digital radio continues to make progress. Twenty three public radio stations in Alaska have fully converted to digital broadcast technology. Four stations are scheduled for conversion during the spring/summer season. One station continues work on design and work scope issues.
- Coordination of group bids on behalf of twenty three out of twenty six stations has been completed. Coordination of group equipment purchases has proven to be cost efficient, with most items coming in below the original estimates per station. Competitive bidding for group equipment purchase has yielded an average discount of 26% thus far resulting in savings of \$468,000.
- Group purchasing also results in standardizing core transmission technology throughout the statewide system. This in turn fosters more efficient and cost effective technical support within the system today and in the future.
- Technical training on new equipment has occurred for some key station technical staff including four engineers who had a full week of digital transmission equipment training at Harris Broadcasters in Quincy, Illinois. Technical support for station design and installation work of their digital transmission facilities is on-going with all stations.

Digital conversion activity detail January 1, 2009 – March 31, 2009:

The first quarter of 2009 we accomplished more work toward completing the statewide HD Radio project.

1) KUCB-FM, Unalaska-Dutch Harbor

- a) The transmitter failed which resulted in an inability to put the system in digital transmission and also forced a reduction in power of the transmitter signal. The transmitter is under warranty and the manufacturer is replacing the complete transmitter. We expect to have the new transmitter installed sometime in May.

2) KSDP-AM, Sand Point

- a) Design has been completed for the Antenna Tuning Unit (ATU) for Sand Point. For technical reasons due to the tower height in Sand Point, the design has been difficult. Jim Moser of Kintronic Labs and Steven Lockwood of Hatfield and Dawson cooperated on the design. The design is novel and very impressive. The ATU is under construction and testing. We expect it to be on site in Sand Point sometime in June and hope to have HD radio going in June.

3) KUAC-FM, Fairbanks:

- a) The test equipment which we installed at the KUAC transmitter site has confirmed our suspicions that the readings of reflected power on the transmitter wattmeter were incorrect due to equipment failure. Digital transmissions have commenced and the signal is being adjusted for optimal coverage and reliability.